

## [James Cape]

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FOLKSTUFF - RANGE LORE [125?]

Gauthier.Sheldon F.

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James Cape, 110 or more, living at 3101 Clinton St. Fort Worth, Texas, was born a slave to Bob Huston, who owned a plantation and ranch located in Gonzales co. Texas. The date of Cape's birth is estimated to have been sometime prior to 1831. He was reared on a horse and cattle [ranch?] which was owned by his master. He learned to ride at an early age and worked on a horse ranch for his master until the Civil War commenced. After the commencement of the Civil War he was sent to the Confederate Army by his master and remained in the service until the war ended. Cape returned to Texas after being mustered out of the army and resumed his range work. He secured work on a cattle operated by two brothers named Ross, which were cattle rustlers. He engaged in [the?] cattle drive to Kansas City and there took "French leave" from the rustling outfit. His next job was on a farm attending horses for Jessie James. After [concluding?] his employment on the James farm, he returned to Texas and located in Fort Worth, where he has resided since.

His story of range life follows:

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"Ise bo'n down yonder in South Texas, long time befo' de war. When Ise bo'n am de question dis colo'ed person can't answer, 'cept Ise knows 'twas mo'e dan 110 yeahs 'go. De place whar Ise bo'n am in Gonzales co, Texas. 'Twas on de farm of [Marster?] Bob Huston. Him owned a hoss and cattle ranch too. Ise a grown [u?] nigger long time befo' de war wid de Yank's. C12 - Texas

["Yous?] see my pappy and mammy am bought by Marster Bob. My pappy am bo'n in Africa. 'Twas what am told to me by him. Pappy am brought to dis country and him am sold to folks in [Virginia?], den Marster Bob took dem to Texas.

"I so young [when?] [Ise?] [learnt?] to ride Ise [not?] forgets when 'twas. De first wo'k Ise 'members 'bout am riding hosses 'tendin' to de critters [and?] hosses on de ranch. De ranch am 2 de first place Ise 'members bing at.

"'Twas 'bout 10 hands wo'kin' fo' Marster Bob on de ranch 'tendin' de hosses. [Weuns?] lived in de bunk house [and?] have de special cook fo' to cook de meals.

"[De?] chuck am meat, beans an' co'n bread an' black coffee. Sometimes de cook make [weuns?] some fried pies, but dat am not often, 'cause it am [just?] once in a while him gets de hands on dried fruit so him can make pies.

"De wo'k weuns have to do am watch de herd an' bust 'em. Marster Bob have so much as 1000 herd of hosses sometimes. Him am buyin' an' sellin' all de time. Weuns raised lots of hosses an' gets lots from Mexico.

"Many times weuns go 'cross de Rio Grande ribber an' fitch hosses back to de Marster's ranch. [When?] weuns goes fo' de hoses thar am six in de crew. 'Twas de cook an' five riders. Weuns don't have any chuck wagon wid weuns. All de things am toted on pack hosses. When night comes weuns sleep on de [ground?] an' rest de head on de saddle.

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"When weuns am coming back wid hosses part of de crew has to ride de line every night. Ridin' de line am ridin' 'round de herd fo' to keep dem bunched.

"'Twas never hard fo' to drive de hosses, 'cause deys not skiddish 'bout [gwine?] on de stomp like de cattle am. 'Course if a bustin' storm comes in de face of the hosses den [deys?] will try fo' to run de tudder way.

"De [worstest?] time lse [?] wid a herd of hosses am one time weuns am [fetchin'?] 'bout 200 from Mexico. De hosses am fine stock 3 dat have racin' blood an' de Marster an awful pa'ticula' 'bout de critters. 'Cause of de ind of hosees deys am weuns whar awful carful 'bou losin' 'em.

"'Twas hot day, awful hot. De hosses am all wet an' whar just moppin' 'long. De drivin' boss am named Rodgers and ' him sez to weuns, 'gosh fo' mighty boys, weuns am gwine to have pert spell of weather an' weuns will have plenty of ridin' to do holdin' de critters.' Sho nuff, de wind comes, dat am alright fo' weuns hold 'em. Den de rain come an' dat am alright, 'cause weuns hold 'em, but den hail come an' dat warnt alright weuns don't hold 'em. No sar, dem hosses goes plum loco.

"When de hail hits de hosses turns 'bout likes a bunch of sojiers an' deys goes hilter-skilter running' 'way from de storm. 'Twarnt any woods near by, so 'twarnt any place fo' shelter, but deys runnin' fo some place anyway.

"When hosses gwines on de stomp thar am only one thin' to do an' dat am wo'k on de leaders. [?] is de one dat am put in de lead always when de herd gets de runs, 'cause lse is de bestest rider of de whole crew. So, lse goes to de lead fo' to give a leader fo' de herd. Hosses follows de leader always. Weuns am told by de boss man, 'don't mind de hail just save de hosses', but how can weuns don't mind de hail when deys am acamin' wham, wham, plunk, bustin' weuns on de back, legs an' arms. De big hat saved de heads. If 'twarnt fo' de big hat weuns sho would been knocked loco. Weuns keeps ridin' 'cause

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'twas no shelter an' weuns just as well ride as stand still. Ise stay in de lead an' de tudders of de riders ride at de side fo' to keep de hosses from scatterment. 4 "De hail last 'bout 10 minutes, an' Ise bet in de 10 minutes de hosses runs 10 miles. Every time a hail stone hits de hosses deys tries to run a little faters. Soon as de hail stopped Ise Ise starts to circle and de herd follows me. 'Twarnt long after dat 'til weuns have de animals settled. But, weuns lost a couple dat am knocked down by de hail. Yas, Sar, just plum knocked down an' de tudder animals stomped on de hosses till deys is dead. All de tudder hosses am bumps all over thar bodies. Weuns mens am de same. Fo' a week after weuns squeel like pigs when weuns tries to move fast, 'cause of de sore spots. Dem hail stones am big, some of dem am big as base balls, but feel like two base balls when deys hit.

"Marster Bob bustest de hosses fo' de saddle an' [?] dem in many places. Weuns takes de hosses to dif'rent places East and North.

"Hoss bustin' am de wo'k Ise like to do an' after Ise learnt to ride 'em 'twas no hoss dat could put dis nigger off de leather. No, Sar, deys just can't put dis nigger on de ground, Ise stay wid de pitchers till dyes plumb tuckered out. Marster Bob uster call me de ridin' fool, 'cause I warnt skeert 'bout ridin' any hoss an' would ever give up.

"When weuns am ready fo' to bust a hoss, weuns put de loop on it and it an' snub de animal. Den weuns puts de blind on it an' de saddle on de back. Den de criters am ready fo' ridin'. Weuns climb in de saddle takes de blind off an' den de rockin' starts. 5 Some hosses am worser pitcher dan tudders. Some am just natu'al pitchers an' can do the hoochy-koochy while in de air. De hoochy-koochy hoss am not gwine to be ridded 'less de rider am sho nuff hoss rider. Dis colo'ed person can ride 'em, but sometimes sich hosses makes de stars come right down in front of youse an' de it in de daylight. Many times, when de hoss quits pitchin' my nose am leaking blood. De nose bleed am caused by de many times de hoss hits de ground, an' when I sez hit de ground Ise mean hit hard. BCause Ise always stays wid de hoss, Marster Bob calls me de ridin' fool.

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"De Spring of de yeah am when weuns bust de hosses. M'ybe weuns bust 200 or more, an' does dat wo'k fo' two or three months. Dat am [d ne?] after de [r undup?] am over. After de hosses am busted, weuns den ride 'em m'ybe five six times den days am ready for to sell.

"Fo' de care of de hosses on de range 'twarnt much fo' to do 'bout watching dem. Hosses am not like cows. De hoss stays on de rage 'less sonethin' drives dem off. Whar deys am bo'n am whar deys stays if thar am plenty of grass an' watah. What weuns have to watch fo' mostest am de cripples an' hosses dat am 'fected wid some misery. Like if de hoss gets cut an' screw worms gets in de cut. Well, den weuns puts de loop on de critter an' flopps it down an' puts some salve, dat de Marster makes, in de cut fo' to kill de worms. Marster Bob has cattle too, an' weuns have to do de same fo' de critters when screw worms get in de cuts.

"De cattle runs whar dey please. De riders just ride 6 over de range an' sort a headed de cattle back when deys drift to offer off. 'Twas [?] ridin' watching' de cattle cause deys would drift far off if deys warnt watched.

"In de Spring an' Fall de cattle am always rounded up. De brandin' am done in de spring an' de critters am counted too. In de Fall de cattle am counted an' dem what am not de Marster's am cut from de herd.

"Ise wo'ked on de Marster ranch 'til after de war starts. Den one day Marster Bob comes an' sez to me, he sez, 'Jim hows youse likes to jine de army an' look after de hosses fo' de Gen'al. Now, what Ise know 'bout de army am nothin'. So, Ise sez to Marster Bob:

"What does de Gen'al does in de army?"

"De Gen'al am de big boss. He dresses in fine cloths wid pretty buttons an' have awful fine hosses". He tells me. "Deys have music an' lots of fun'.

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“Sho, Ise like to 'tend de Gen'al's hosses", Ise tell him. 'Cause Ise like to wo'k wid fine hosses, an' likes fine music, an' likes to have fun. So I sent away to jine de army.

“Twas fo' Marster Dr Carrol dat Ise go. 'Twas some 'rangement betwix de Marster a' Marster Caroll fo' me gwine. So Ise leave de Marster an' never goes back to him.

“Ise gets in de amy 'round St Louy an' Kansas. Well, it goes well fo' short time. Ise tend de hosses fo' de Gen'al an' de Sergants an' de Captains, but 'twarnt much music o de kind Ise like. Den after while 'twas lots of music, but such kind Ise don't like. 7 'Tendin' de hoss am not all Ise have to do. Weuns gets into battles an' den a couple of times deys put a gun in dis niggers hands an' sez, 'do some fittin' nigger. It is de time fo' youse to fit like youse never fit befo'. Youse see deys drilled me to learnt how to do army fittin'. Deys sez 'twas fo' de pu'pose in case sometain' happens da calls fo' me to fit de Ya k's. Well, dat somthin' happens at In'pedence (Indenpendence). Deys fitted fo' three nights an' days. Thar am [lenty?] music. It [oes?] whiz, whiz, bang, boom an' bang. Den de Captain man puts a gun in my hands [n'?] tells me to jine de [?]'

“Weuns fit hard when weuns warnt 'treatin'. Weuns does mo's running dan fittin' an' dat suits dis nigger. 'Treatin' am one thin' Ise could do bettah da anythin' else.

“De Yank's killed lots of de sojers an' takes lot of dem, an' took lots of guns an' de hosses an' everything. Weuns just leave de stuff an' runs.

“See de scar on dis left shoulder. Well, dats whar Ise gets shot when Ise am fittin', but Ise don't know it 'til de blood wets my shirt. Ise just too 'cited to feel de bullet when it hits me.

“After weuns run fast nuff an' far nuff from de Yank's we stopped an' resed. Den de doctor man fixed my shoulder. De doctor man sez to me, 'nigger if de bullet went three inches to de right it would have cut youse jug' vein an' den Ise not needed to 'tend de wound. Ise told him dat it de jug' vein whar cut Ise not need him to fix de would. 8 “While Ise waitin' fo' de shoulder to get healed, Ise thought lots 'bout what Marster Bob told me 'bout jinin'

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de army. Ise sez to myself' Marster Bob, youse sho done di colo'ed person wrong. Youse sends me to jine de army fo' fun, but Ise sho don't 'joy de way deys play in dis army. 'Tis too rough. Dem Yankmens don't play nice.

"Twas a tudder time weuns fits fo' two days an' nights. De Captainman put a gun in my hand again an' sez,' fit fo' youse life nigger. Da time weuns am fittin' what am call' rear action. Dat am when some de fittin' and de rest run 'way. Ise like to do de runnin' bettah dan de fittin'. but thar Ise am so Ise have to listen to de music 'gain.

"After a while weuns came to a ribber an' thar weuns have to swim fo' to get 'way. Befo Ise gets 'cross dat ribber Ise sho [th ugh?] Ise am gwine to Glory Land. Yas, Sar, if Ise have to go one mo's foot Ise sho be in Glory Land now. Ise made de swim, but lots didn't. De runners am on de tudder side when weuns gets to de ribber, so deys stays thar an' po'tects weuns rear action men , weuns am doin' de swimin'

"Dat am de battle when weuns am tryin' to go into St Louy, but the Yank's stops weuns an' sends weuns back faster dan weuns come.

Weuns gets even wid de Yank's [somet?] mes. One time weuns am over in Ten'see an' weuns stops de train an' took rations, money an' tudder stuff an' den goes on.

"After de war am over Ise sent back to [?]' Ise goes 9 back to Gonzales co,. Ise in de town an' Marster Ross comes up to me an' sez:

"A person told me youse am a good cowhand"

"Yas, sar, Marster, 'tis all Ise know what to do". Ise sez.

"Come wide me if youse want to work on a ranch fo' \$15 a month" he offers me an' Ise take him up.

"Weuns ride many miles den weuns come to de camp meah de San Antonia ribber.

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"Thar am 'bout 12 hands wo'kin' an' weuns sleep in a tent. Thar am a cook an' chuck [?] an' de same old eats. Dat am meat, beans, 'llasses, co'n bread an' fried pies made from dried fruit.

"Marster Ross gives me de job of ridin' de line an' bustin' hosses. 'Twarnt many hosses to bust 'twas just what de hands use m'ybe one two a month.

"Marster Ross gets de wild hosses dat no body ownes Weuns go whar de wild hosses am an' catch 'em, an' right thar weuns bust 'em.

"Marster Ross sometimes has 1000 head of cattle, den he sells 'em 'til thar am m'ybe less den 500. Thar whar cattle comin' an' goin' all de time.

"Marster Ross, wid four five hands, am gone mostest of de time. Dey would leave an' be gone from one to three weeks an' den days would come in wid a small herd of cattle.

"Ise thinks, sho Marster Ross has lots of money. 'cause deys don't pay any [??] to raisin' critters, but just buys an' sells. 10 "One time Marster Ross an' his crew am 'way fo' 'bout two weeks an' dat time when deys come back deys have no cattle wid 'em. One of de crew don't come back wid 'em. Dat night Ise hears 'em talkin' 'bout how de one dat didn't come back am killed, by de folks dat chase 'em. Deys talk 'bout how de rest of 'em gets 'way an' sich talk.

"Dat night when Ise rolls in fo' to sleep, Ise keep thinking' 'bout what Ise hear 'em talkin' 'bout. Ise ask myself, 'what fo' Marster Ross an' de crew am chased am' why fo' de chasers killed one of 'em.

"Youse see, de days Ise wid Marster Bob Houston that warnt nothin' sez 'bout stealin' cattle, but Ise 'members 'bout one time Marster Houston talks 'bout hoss stealin' an' hows some fellows gets hanged. Den if comes to me what am de trouble. I sez, ho, ho! to myself, dat how comes all de fine steers an' dats how comes Marster Ross an' de crew



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am chased an' sich. Deys caught stealin' cattle m'ybe, Ise sez. Ise not sho, Ise just had a sneakin' idea 'bout 'em stealin'.

“After dat Ise tries to hear what de mens am talkin' 'bout every chance Ise have. Ise sort of acts like Ise payin' no mind to what deys sez, but dis niggers ears am always open. Den one night Ise hears Marster Bob talkin' 'bout de dark of de moon at sich an' sich time an' dat 'twould be good time to get [?] cattle at sich n' sich [lace?]. Ise sez to myself, de dark of de moon am no good time to buy cattle, dat am de time fo' to steal critters. Den Ise sho what Marster Ross am doin'.

“After hearin' 'bout de dark moon talk, Ise think lots 'bout what Master Houston sez 'bout hangin' de fellows fo stealin' 11 hosses an' Ise think 'bout hows do hangers gwine to know who am de stealers on Marster Ross place if dey comes to hang. No, sar, dis nigger don't wants to be hanged fo' stealin' cattle, so Ise figure on how to get 'way.

“Ise figure an' figure on how to get 'way [rom?] Marster Ross, but how to get 'way was puzzlement to me. After while Ise 'cides to tell Marster Ross Ise lomesome fo' to go back to Marster Bob Houston's place an' dat Ise told him. But, 'twarnt good nuff story. Marster Ross sez, 'nigger, when Ise ready fo'to let youse go I'll tell youse an' if youse leave heah befo' I'll put daylight through youse. Gosh fo' mighty, thar Ise is. If Ise leave Marster Ross would shot me, an' if Ise stay m'ybe de hangers would get me.

“Ise sho skeert after dat. very time Ise see someone comin' to de camp, Ise could feel de rope 'round my neck an' see myself hangin' from de limb of de tree, and' de buzzards flyin' 'round.

“One day six fellows comes ridin' into de camp. Deys have six-shooters in thar belts an' some had rifles beside'. Ise sez, to myself, 'nigger, de army would be nice place fo' youse now'. Ise sho deys am de hangers, but deys asked fo' de boss man an' sez, some one stole hosses from dem. Deys looked over hosses in de corral an' "amined [?] brands.

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While deys am doin' de lookin' Ise doin' de shiverments. After deys find no hosses dat am theirs, dey rode 'way. Ise sho glad deys warnt lookin' fo' cattle.

"Marster Ross often drives cattle to [?] places an' 12 Ise think 'bout dat. It comes to dis niggers head a scheme. Ise sez to myself, 'dats how Ise gets 'way from heah. Ise gets to go on a drive an' make de sneak when weuns am far [?]. De next time Ise see Master Ross, after Ise get de ideas 'bout de drive, Ise sez to him, Marster [?] Ise awful good hand on de drive. Old Marster Bob sez Ise de bestes hand him have. Ise like fo' to make de drive fo' to see de country'. All him sez am dat he would think 'bout it,' cause him don't drive far him don't need much drivin' hands. Dat don't sound so good to dis nigger. So Ise starts some more thinkin'. "'Bout week after Ise asked him to wo'k me on de drive. Marster Bob comes to me an' sez. 'Jim Ise gwine to gather big herd an' drive 'em way up North. Youse sez youse am a good driver so Ise take youse 'long. 'Twill be de first drive Ise make like dat an' need good hands'.

"'Twarnt long after dat 'til weuns have big herd and [?] de drive.

"Thar whar 13 tudder mens 'sides me. Thar whar de cook an' 12 riders an' Ise de hoss wrangler wid 'bout 50 hosses fo' to 'tend. De riders changed hosses often an' weuns have some extra 'case some gets hurt or die.

"Weuns drive slow' all day to let de critters eat while deys drift, 'cept when 'twas far betwex watch den weuns hustle de critters 'long fo' to reach de watch. Weuns always tries to reach de watch fo' campin' place fo' de night.

"Durin' de night thar am always four mens riding' de line. After one crew wo'ks four hours den a tudder crew takes thar place , 13 Ridin' de line am done fo' to keep [atch?] of de critters 'case de herd wants to go on de stomp. Of course, de critters bed down at night, but mostest anythin' would put de fear in 'em an' den days start on de run.

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"Weuns drift through mud, rain, cross stream an' dry country. Wehn 'twas far betwix, watah, 'twas hard to hold de critters after de s smell de watah. De critters could smell watah fo' mo'e dan ten miles an' [?] deys did 'twas rush to get thar.

"Weuns have to cross ribbers many times an' some am wide. After crossin' couple streams, de criters learnt to cross wid out much trouble. 'cept when de stream am swift. If de stream am swift 'twould carry de critters too far down de stream an' deys den m'ybe miss de landin's. De riders have to fit 'gainst de drift, so deys swim thar hosses side of the critters an' wave thar slickers or anythin' to make de critters swim 'gainst de stream.

"Ise only have to 'tend to swimmin' de hosses 'cross an' deys don't give me much trouble. All Ise do am ride one hoss in de lead an' de tudders would follow de leader.

"Weuns have some stomps, but Ise never called on to help wid a stomp 'cept once. 'Twas a bad storm, an awful hard one an' one ride gets killed dat night. 'cause de hoss steps in de hole an' de rider am throwed in front of de running herd.

"'Twas in de night when de stomp start. De sky am full of fire an' de thunder am clappin' just one after de tudder. Marster Ross called de cook an' me an' all de riders dat am sleepin' am' sez. 'keep de herd from scatterment'. [hen?] de 14 fire flash weuns could see, den 'twould be dark till de next flash. So weuns watch de herd when de flashes come an' dat way keep track of 'em an' could once in a while see a tudder rider.

"Marster Ross told weuns 'twarnt use to try fo' to stop' de run 'til de storm stopped, but to watch fo' de bunches of critters dat sep'rate from de main herd. "Twas a prairie country an' dat warnt so bad to wo'k a stomp. All weuns riders do am string out at de side of de herd an' head de critters back dat starts to break 'way.

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"De storm last 'bout 30 minutes an' when it stops Ise' goes to de lead wid some tudders. Weuns shot de guns in de face of de leaders an' 'twarnt long 'til de herd am circlin' an' den soon dey am settled.

"Weuns drifted fo' many days. Ise don't how many, but after while weuns cones to Kansas City. When de critters am in de pens, de Marster sez to weuns, 'now weuns rest fo' a couple days an' den start back. Ise sez this nigger am not gwine back [?]. Ise sez dat to myself, not to Marster Ross. To him Ise sez, 'sho Ise be on hand'. Marster Ross give me \$10 an' sez have a good time, but Ise sez to myself, 'sho, Ise have a good time wid it saving my neck from de rope.

"Ise goes off by myself an' comes to a bench infront of a saloon an' thar Ise sats to think what to do. Den a fine lookin' white man comes up to me an' sez to me, 'what does youse know 15 'bout 'tendin' hosses an' cattle'. Course Ise told him 'bout Marster Bob Houston an' dat him sez Ise de ridin' fool an' sich. De man sez, him wants a good hoss man on his farm in Mo., an' Ise tells him Ise want a job pow'ful bad, an' him sez, 'come wid me'. He told me his name am James an' had some good hosses dat him wants good care taken of 'em.

"Thar am 'bout 15 fine hosses on de place an' some cattle an' all Ise do am 'tend to de stock. He paid me \$25 a month an' gives me extra money lots of times. Ise stayed thar for three yeahs.

"Ise gets lonesome fo' Texas an' dat am de reason Ise quit Marster Jame's place. Befo' Ise quit Ise learnt dat him am de Jessie James dat am de outlaw, but him am a fine man to me.

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"Ise come back to Texas an' lands in Fort Worth an' heah Ise stay. After Ise cone heah Ise wo'k fo' stock men, 'til de stockyards am put up, an' den Ise worked in de stock pens. Dat Ise do 'til 10 yeahs ago."